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is, is his creation. But the relationship between God and the created world is once more viewed as a dichotomy. And in this final context only the forms of religious action which bear on the living, active powers of the deity are 'of God', while all others, having become part of his completed creation, are classed with the 'things in the world'.

We shall later exemplify this somewhat sophisticated point in Nupe theology. As regards the dualism of God and the World, it is aligned with yet another, of more concrete character, of the sky and the earth. Together, these four concepts describe the Nupe universe; for it contains no other cosmic entities, for example, no underworld or some yonder inhabited by the spirits of the dead; nor have the Nupe anything to say about the stars, the sun, or the moon. In all relevant respects the created world (*yiže*) is identical with the earth (*kin*); while the Creator is identified with the sky. Though the supreme being is also addressed or referred to as *tsóci*, 'Our Lord',[1] his proper name is *Sokó*, which is best translated as God-the-Sky, the same word also denoting the sky in the visible, physical sense.[2]

As God is identified with the sky, so he is also said to dwell in the sky. But this belief is vague and contradicted by other statements, as are most assertions on the nature of the supreme deity. In fact, nothing very definite can be said or is known about God. He is not on earth, and the most common and most strongly emphasized comment on the nature of the deity is *Sokó lokpá*, 'God is far away'. Yet in a different, more mystic sense he is present, always and everywhere; thus in a song I recorded it is said—

God is in front,
He is in the back.

God has clearly awareness, intellect, and some of the sensitiveness of man; for he is addressed and appealed to in everyday language. But he is hidden and cannot be seen; nor is he personified more concretely; indeed, no one knows if he is or is not like man.[3]

[1] The suffix *-ci* means 'our'; the word *tsó* occurs normally as a suffix of other words, denoting 'owner of' or 'master of', e.g. *kin-tsó*, Owner of the Land, *emi-tsó*, Family Head.

[2] There exists another word for 'sky', *sama*, which is of Hausa-Arabic origin and is used, at least today, when referring to the sky and firmament in the material sense, e.g. 'the sky is black', 'the sky is clear', etc. The word *Sokó*, incidentally, also indicates something big or great, the suffix *-kó* having that implication.

[3] Strictly speaking, therefore, there is no justification for calling the supreme deity 'he'. In Nupe language this issue does not arise since the personal pronouns have no gender and do not distinguish between animate and inanimate objects. For purely practical reasons, however, I shall continue to employ the personal pronoun in the masculine.

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only among the Beni) the burial of lepers is the responsibility of the *gunnu* priests; and leprosy, as we know, is considered a 'disease of God', as the *gunnu* is a '*kuti* of God.' In their speculations about the meaning of the myth the Nupe indeed seize upon this last point. But they would only enlarge upon the terrifying aspects of leprosy and its divine preordainedness, being content to draw the parallel with a *kuti* equally powerful, dangerous, and divinely preordained. Their interest does not go further; none of my informants, for example, referred to the male-female principle believed to govern leprosy (and unrepresented in the ritual); nor did they attempt to relate the name *gunnu* to the name for leprosy, *Sokó 'gū*, an etymological speculation which, from my knowledge of the Nupe ways of thinking, I should have expected. The Nupe, in brief, do not feel the need for any closely argued 'mythical charter' of their religious practices; and indeed, as I have stressed, the *gunnu* myth is altogether an exception.

A few informants offered me their theories about the derivation of the name *gunnu*. According to one the ritual was so called because of *egū na dā minɨ́ 'nu ô na*, because of the 'red earth that is inside (the furrows) of hoeing'; according to another the reason was that, in the ritual, 'one reaches the end of the wandering, it is accomplished', *àgǔ 'nu mā, nwa dà zo*; in a third interpretation *gunnu* was taken to be the word *nugū* ('boundary', 'limits'), reversed.[1] The first version would merely bring out the character of the *gunnu* as a farmer's ritual; the other two versions go more deeply, alluding to the characteristic concern of the ritual with the completion of a phase, and with 'end' and 'renewal'. Even so, the arguments are specious ones, ignoring, for example, the tone structure of Nupe language. Let us call them what they are, a play upon words and mere speculation.

To turn to the ceremonial itself. It lasts for three to five days, according to the amount of food and drink which the people are able to accumulate. The celebration I observed in Doko started on the 17th of February and lasted until the 19th.[2] Like the *ɨ̌iba*, the *gunnu* has an esoteric part, performed outside the village, in the secrecy of the *gunnu 'bà* ('*gunnu* place'), and a public one, performed on the village dancing ground. The congregation of the esoteric rite includes both older men and youths, the youngest being about 15. The *gunnu* place looks much like the places of

[1] Such reversals of bisyllabic nouns occur quite often in Nupe language; they turn the noun into the corresponding verb, so that *nugū*, 'limit', would become *gū(ɛ)-nu* 'reaching the limit', 'accomplish'.

[2] The date is not inflexible; in the same year the nearby village of Pichi celebrated the *gunnu* almost a month later, since the people had no 'leisure' before that, being kept busy by the collection of tax arrears.

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'The women are those who have witchcraft. The *Lelu* is the one who is the elder (i.e. head) of the witches. If a woman should wish to practise witchcraft, she would go and visit the *Lelu*, saying she desired witchcraft-doing. The witches are wont to forgather at night under a tree; they would hold council as to the place they would be going to that day. The people say that the witches eat the body (*nakã*) of human beings. But it is one by one that they kill a person, the person whose turn it would be that day. The witches would go and look for someone to kill, they would then bring along the body, they divide and eat it. If the witches have no (other) person to kill, they will kill one of their own people, divide the body and eat it. One witch would do thus—kill her son or brother or grandchild, she would bring the body along, they would divide it and eat. But if the witches want money, they would take the man (the victim) to another country and go and sell him (to the witches there).—The Nupe believe that witches have medicine which makes them fly. They would be flying for example from this town to the place where the Hausa live, inside the night, they would return at daybreak. If they intend to kill a person they keep on looking for a person who is not healthy. Then, people say, they have a medicine which eats the life (*rayi*) little by little. They keep him so that he may be eaten, but if they find a person who is not sick, they would seize the shadow (*fifingi*) of the person who is healthy. Then he would begin to be ill, then they keep on eating his life (*rayi*), little by little, until he is dead. But if they find a person who has a medicine against witches, it would help him, he would recover, he would not happen to die.'

Let me add these comments. The word for witchcraft is *ega*, and for witch *gaci* (pl. *gaciši*), the suffix *-ci* indicating the actor or owner;[1] used by itself, *gaci* always denotes females. As the first sentences show, one can 'have' witchcraft, or 'do' and 'practise' it, much as one 'has' or 'practises' a faculty or skill. It is not hereditary; many examples are quoted of witches whose children 'have' no witchcraft or of girls who became witches in a family not otherwise contaminated by witchcraft. But a mother who is a witch may make her child one also, by feeding it on witchcraft *cigbe* or in some other fashion initiating it into the secrets of witchcraft. The method of acquiring witchcraft described in the text, by an approach to the head of the witches, is not the only one; a woman desirous of becoming a witch may also approach another woman who is known to be one and through her gain entry into the circle of witches; or she may buy one of those

[1] Cp. *lati*, farm, and *latici*, farmer; or *cigbe*, medicine, and *cigbeci*, medicine-man.